DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 103 792 CG 009 667

AUTHOR	Reum, Earl; Cummings, Oneta
TITLE	The Effective Student Council in the Mid-Seventies.
INSTITUTION	National Association of Secondary School Principals, Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE	73
NOTE	51p.
AVAILABLE FROM	National Association of Secondary School Principals, Dulles International Airport, P.O. Box 17430, Washington, D.C. 20041 (HC $2.00)
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.76 HC Not Available from EDRS..PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS	Books; Futures (of Society); *Objectives; *Organizational Change; *Organizational Effectiveness; *Program Evaluation; Secondary Education; State of the Art Reviews; *Student Government

ABSTRACT

In 1964 the National Association of Secondary School Principals published a book entitled The Effective Student Council by Oneta Cummings, which spoke about the student council situation as it existed at that time. During the past nine years, the concept and effectiveness of student council have changed dramatically. The National Association of Student Councils now re-issues this book, edited and updated to fit appropriately into the world of the 70's in which student councils are making new and effective differences. The authors focus on the nature of a currently effective student council. They suggest the need for discussion on the subject of how a student council in a secondary school can become more effective and more productive, with time spent on clarifying goals, evaluating programs, and choosing new goals that make a difference in the life of today's student body. (Author/PC)

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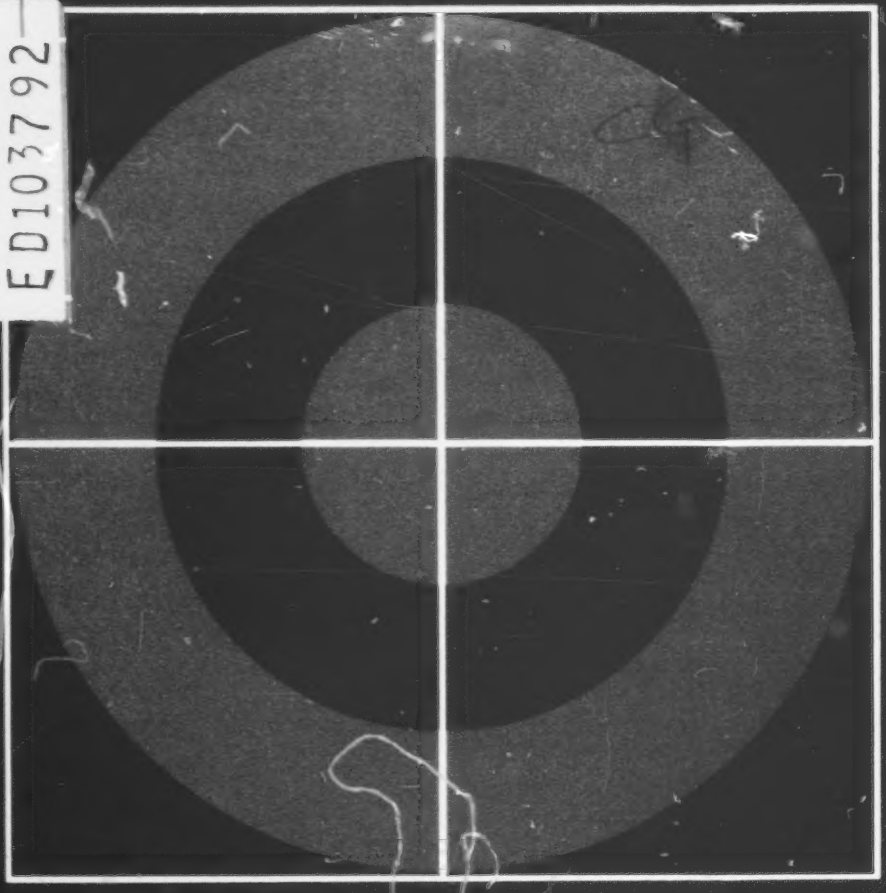

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The Effective Student Council in the Mid-Seventies

by
Earl Reum &
Oneta Cummings

NASSP
Office of
Student
Activities

The Effective Student Council in the Mid-Seventies

by EARL REUM and ONETA CUMMINGS

THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS
WASHINGTON, D.C.

The Effective Student Council in the Mid-Seventies by Earl Reum and Oneta Cummings is a revision of *The Effective Student Council* by Oneta Cummings, published by the National Association of Secondary School Principals in 1964.

The Effective Student Council in the Mid-Seventies

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ISBN: 0-88210-047-5

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Foreword

In 1964 the National Association of Secondary School Principals published a book entitled *The Effective Student Council* by Oneta Cummings. *The Effective Student Council* had much to say to the student council situation as it existed at that time. During the past nine years, the concept and effectiveness of student council have changed dramatically. The National Association of Student Councils now re-issues this fine book, edited and brought up to date to fit appropriately into the world of the '70's, in which student councils are making new and different kinds of effective difference.

We hope you find this book helpful and encouraging. At the same time we hope you know that the spirit of student council has been preserved in this revision. We address ourselves to this question: What is an effective student council for this year? We must talk about how a student council in a secondary school can become more effective and more productive. We must spend time clarifying goals, evaluating programs, and choosing new goals that make a difference in the life of the student body this year.

Here is a guide book, pointing to areas which ought to be thoroughly examined if the student council is to maintain a course toward viable effectiveness. We hope you find it valuable.

OWEN B. KIERNAN
Executive Secretary

National Association of Secondary School Principals

Introduction

Effective student councils don't just happen. They grow—as the result of continuous planning, work, and effort on the part of students, faculty, administrators, and community.

What are the characteristics of a successful student council? How can these characteristics be developed? What distinguishes a successful council from one that is not successful? How can a council and its activities be evaluated and then made more effective in the lives of students within a school for this year? These are all important questions that must be faced by student council leaders, by advisers, by parents, by members of the community, by faculty members, and by students within the student body.

Essentials of an Effective Student Council

A vital requisite of an effective student council is that it be *active*—that it do things of significance. A council which does little but meet and discuss will probably not have much impact or influence in the life of a school. However, just being busy or active does not necessarily indicate that a council is doing an effective job. It must accomplish worthwhile objectives through its activities and it must contribute to the total education and development of all the students.

If a council is to be accepted as an integral part of the total school program, it must have *certain basic standards* toward which it is working at all times through its projects. These standards include an understanding of the basic philosophy of what a student council is and how it serves in the total learning process of the school. The student body, faculty, and administration will respect and support the standards of the effective student council.

The successful student council operates on *sound democratic organizational principles.* It plans and conducts effective meetings. It has sufficient physical facilities to function effectively. It handles its finances properly and in a business-like manner and

has a workable constitution which has been adopted by and is known to the entire student body.

Leadership training is offered to members of the council, as well as to any other students who might be interested in such training. The council has developed competent student leaders who are interested and active—but not domineering—advisers.

The effective student council also conducts democratic elections, works toward strengthening public relations, solves school and council problems systematically and effectively, has a solid year-round program of training and activities, and seeks to improve itself through frequent evaluations. The effective student council must consider the growth and development of its individual members as well as the members of the student body. It must consider the groups, clubs, and organizations and even the temporary systems which exist inside the secondary school of today. It must be adaptable enough to fit into the flexible and modular scheduling practices which are almost individual circumstances within secondary schools of the nation.

A Part of the Curriculum

Everything the school does which contributes to the learning, growth, and development of the student must be classified as a part of the curriculum. The student council can and should play a vital part in this growth and development. It must furnish every student the opportunity to learn, to do, and to practice doing those things which a good citizen, scholar, leader, and follower must do. The student council must be concerned with the world, with vocational education, with projects which are meaningful in themselves to the *present* student body under the *particular* circumstances of the school. The living curriculum is as important as the organizational curriculum, and the student council must know that the effective student council is the living student council.

The Effective Student Council in the Mid-Seventies

Adult Leadership and Cooperation

For a student council to be effective, the administration must be interested and cooperative, as well as supportive in those places which make a difference. Most principals support a student council if it functions effectively and realizes its limitations as well as its strengths.

Student council, as we know it, is not student government in the sense that it runs the school. In the United States of America, most schools are administered by an elected school board of citizen representatives who choose the administrative staff, who hire the teaching staff, who provide the learning experiences for young people—and student council is one of those learning experiences. A council's powers, therefore, come from the school board through the administration to the student council adviser and the council itself.

The fact that the council derives its authority from the school board and administration indicates that the student council does not have the legal authority that student leaders sometimes assume that it has. The student council is an educational vehicle for helping young people learn about themselves, their school and the world, organization, planning, and procedures of working within the system; at the same time, it provides for student voice in the managerial function of the secondary school.

Some principals resist the student council when it tries to make decisions which are beyond its realm of authority. Some principals are reluctant to give students voice or power in their school because of "bad" experiences in the past. Other principals simply do not know enough about the purposes of a student council and how it should operate in order to be effective in their schools. Some principals relegate all power to a "building

committee" which doles out various measures of authority to the groups and organizations within a school but has no special regard for functions of the student council.

Many of these alternatives need re-thinking and re-facing. But in *every* case, a student council must prove, through its words, its actions, and its procedures, that it can and will be a help to the entire school program. Such proof may mean that the council will start with a relatively minor series of service activities. The principal must regard the activity as worthy and regard the council as an agency for positive service to the school and its community. The council helps a principal to determine for himself what he regards as the limits of the power and influence of what a student group can do within his school. If the council, by thorough and orderly execution of plans, can show its willingness to work, even on minor projects, it will earn the opportunity to become involved in more significant kinds of activities within the school.

Determining the place of the council in the school is a growth process which takes place from year to year and provides an annual learning opportunity for a student council.

The magic words are *trust* and *effectiveness*. A principal is more willing to entrust increased power and responsibility to a council after it has proved its effectiveness in what both regard as minor issues. Eventually, a principal may even seek assistance from the council and come to depend on it as a vehicle within his school administration for making decisions and for providing defensible educational experiences for young people.

The Principal

Too often, councils do not keep their principals informed about what council members are doing or planning. Such behavior leads to administrative opposition and creates mutually unpleasant feelings. It may lead to a curtailment of student council activities.

If a principal knows far enough ahead what the council is considering, he has time both to voice his objections *and* to suggest ways to eliminate these objections. He also has ample time to clear potential obstacles which may be in the way of effective operation. He needs to check with the custodian, the building

committee, the various department heads, and the activity calendar.

Many councils have found it valuable to have a principal's representative on the council, or to involve representatives of a principal's advisory board in the early planning stages of a project. Such representatives make regular reports to the principal, both orally and in writing, just as other representatives report to the homerooms, clubs, classes or other groups that they represent. Through these reports, the principal can keep informed of council plans and activities without actually having to sit in on the meetings or having to make time for frequent meetings with the faculty adviser. A principal can suggest items for discussion to his representative and have them placed on the agenda. Councils which keep their administrations informed and involved are constantly reporting the success of their experiences and the increasing depth of their responsibility in the schools.

The Effective Adviser

The adviser may well be the most important factor in the success of a student council. His qualifications must be both personal and professional. His abilities must include effective procedures and in-depth awareness of other human beings.

There are many methods for selecting a student council adviser. Some schools utilize student selection or faculty selection, but the most frequently used method is appointment by the principal in terms of the personal qualifications of the candidate. The student council adviser must be a person who will supply the necessary guidance and direction for effective student council operation. He must know the system and the students within the system. He must know the faculty in its individual and collective personalities. He must be able to work with the building committee, the department chairmen, the custodial staff, the lunchroom staff, the bus driver, and the groundspeople; and he must constantly be aware that the learning experiences of young people are crucial.

The student council adviser must be interested in council work and devote sufficient time to it. This assignment should not be in addition to a full time teaching load but should be part of the teaching load. Student council must be regarded as a

meaningful learning experience for young people, as important as any other section of the curriculum. The adviser should not be a teacher new to the school system but should be fully aware of the policies concerning school activities and student participation.

A good adviser should have a pleasing personality, imagination, resourcefulness, a professional outlook, a belief in democratic procedures, and a willingness to learn and grow along with the student council.

Ideally, the adviser should use every opportunity available to become better trained in the field of student participation in school government. He should attend and participate in student council conferences at district, state, regional, and national levels. He should participate in local and state workshops and read the available professional publications. The number of college courses related to activities are limited, but, when courses are available, the adviser should try to participate in them to further his training as an educator working with young people involved in student council. Ideally, he works closely with the state association and the projects and activities which it conducts, and sees to it that his students participate in these activities and have a chance to learn from them.

Length of Service

Some administrators seem to feel that being a student council adviser takes so much time and energy that no person should be required to serve in this capacity for very long. In some schools the adviser and assistant adviser are new each year, with the assistant becoming the new adviser the following year. Such short-range council sponsorship harms the council, because it takes longer than one year for a person to become aware of the tremendous demands of being an adviser. Such a procedure also makes the adviser feel that his term is not long enough to justify an effort to learn much about the student council, or to be concerned with what it accomplishes or what students learn from the experience. The over-all effect is that the council continues to do the same things it has always done, year after year, without seeking self-improvement or appropriate programs; it certainly misses the entire field of long-range activities and significant evaluation.

Unfortunately, the pattern across the nation is that, on an annual basis, fully half the student council advisers are brand-new. The only possible way that student councils can survive is for effective student leadership to continue in every state and for advisers to remain as advisers for as long as they are effective. Out of professional honesty, every adviser should poll his council to measure his own personal effectiveness and his own limitations to be sure that he may continue as an effective council adviser without destroying the learning experience for young people.

The Student Activities Office of the National Association of Secondary School Principals has published a number of books which will help the student council adviser; one is, *Now You're in the Middle* by Kent Keith. It is a significant handbook for a student council adviser and is worthy of being re-read a number of times.

The Effective Student Council in the Mid-Seventies

The Constitution

Every student council needs a good constitution, a written document which contains the basic principles under which the council is organized and operated. The student body itself should be aware of the procedures which this document outlines. Annual review is most appropriate for today's secondary school population. Every constitution is written for a specific school at a specific time and is designed to meet the needs of that particular school situation.

A constitution should not be written or revised quickly; neither should it be written by only one person. Many students and faculty members can be involved during the basic planning stages, and then a smaller group can be assigned to do the actual writing of the document. A constitution should not be lengthy or wordy and it should be written in terms which are understood by all the members of the school community. The constitution should be designed to help the council accomplish its goals. It must not be so difficult to follow that it becomes a hindrance to the effective functioning of the council.

Ingredients of a Constitution

Basically, the constitution will contain articles concerning the following topics: name of the organization; purposes; power and authority; organization and membership; qualifications for membership; officers; duties and responsibilities of officers and members; committees; meetings; adviser; adoption and amendment procedures; parliamentary authority; and by-laws.

After a constitution has been written and approved by the student council and the administration (and in some schools,

the faculty), it should be submitted to the student body for acceptance or rejection. A two-thirds majority vote of the council and a simple majority approval of the student body is usually required for ratification and adoption. After the constitution has been adopted, copies should be distributed to all students. Some schools regularly include it in the school handbook or distribute mimeographed copies.

A Sample Constitution

Here is an example of a student council constitution. It should not be considered a "model" constitution, but its content and style may help in drawing up a workable document for your school.

ARTICLE I

Name

Section 1. The name of this organization shall be the Student Council of Leadership High School.

ARTICLE II

Purposes

Section 1. The purposes of this organization shall be to: provide significant learning experiences for students, staff, and community; to develop behavioral evidence of good citizenship, scholarship, leadership, service, and human values; to promote harmonious relationships; to improve morale; to assist in the management of the school; to provide a forum for student voice and channels for student involvement; and to provide orderly direction of school activities.

ARTICLE III

Power and Authority

Section 1. All powers of the student council are delegated to it by the school administration.

ARTICLE IV

Organization and Membership

Section 1. The student council shall consist of one represen-

tative from each social studies class and the officers elected by the student body.

Section 2. The election of class representatives shall take place before the th[illegible]eek of the fall term of school.

Section 3. Vacancies among representatives shall be filled by elections in social studies classes or through the petition system of temporary representation.

ARTICLE V

Qualifications for Officers and Members

Section 1. Any registered student of Leadership High School is eligible for election to the student council.

Section 2. Any student who will be a senior during the term of office is eligible for election to the office of president or vice-president of the student council.

Section 3. An officer or social studies class representative may be removed from his position for failure to attend meetings, failure to represent his group appropriately, failure to carry out his duties, or for any other actions which are detrimental to the school as determined by a two-thirds vote of the council.

ARTICLE VI

Officers

Section 1. The officers of this organization shall be a President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Parliamentarian.

Section 2. Nomination and election of president and vice-president

a. An election committee, appointed by the president, shall formulate and publicize rules governing elections each year.
b. The election shall be held before the last two weeks of the school year.
c. Any member of the junior class is eligible for nomination for the office of president or vice-president of the student council.
d. Students desiring to campaign for the office of president or

vice-president of the student council must file their names with the chairman of the election committee.

e. There shall be one week of campaigning under the direction and supervision of the election committee, after which the election will be held. Voting will be conducted with voting machines or by secret ballot as established by the student council.
f. A majority of the votes cast shall be required for election.
g. A tally of votes and announcements of winners shall be made by the election committee.

Section 3. Nomination and election of other officers

a. The secretary, treasurer and parliamentarian shall be elected by and from the student council as soon as possible after the social studies class representatives have been elected.
b. Any member of the council is eligible for nomination for the office of secretary, treasurer, or parliamentarian.

ARTICLE VII

Duties of Officers and Members

Section 1. Duties of the representatives shall be to:

a. Attend all meetings of the student council.
b. Attend meetings of committees of which they are members.
c. Give student council reports to their constituents after each council meeting.
d. Bring to the council the suggestions and concerns of their constituents.

Section 2. Duties of the president shall be to:

a. Preside over the business meetings of the student council.
b. Use correct parliamentary procedure and other appropriate meeting skills.
c. Vote on any matter in which the council is equally divided.
d. Appoint committees.
e. Act as chairman of the executive committee.

Section 3. Duties of the vice-president shall be to:

a. Perform the duties of the president during any absence of the president.
b. Serve as chairman of the assembly committee.
c. Serve as chairman of the constitution committee.

Section 4. Duties of the secretary shall be to:

a. Take minutes of all official meetings of the student council.
b. Keep a written record of all proceedings of the council.
3. Furnish information to the president and adviser concerning action which should be taken by the council or which has been referred to a committee.
d. Write correspondence for the student council.

Section 5. Duties of the treasurer shall be to:

a. Work with the adviser and school treasurer in maintaining records of receipts and expenditures of the student council.
b. Make a financial report at every regular business meeting of the student council.

Section 6. Duties of the parliamentarian shall be to:

a. See that the council abides by parliamentary procedure and the constitution and by-laws.
b. Assist the council members in learning correct parliamentary procedure and other appropriate meeting skills.

Section 7. All officers shall serve for a term of one school year.

ARTICLE VIII

Committees

Section 1. Standing committees of the student council shall be:

a. Executive Committee
b. Assembly Committee
c. Constitution Committee
d. Evaluation Committee
e. Honors and Awards Committee
f. Safety and Improvement Committee
g. Service and Courtesy Committee
h. Publicity Committee

Section 2. Special committees may be appointed as necessary.

ARTICLE IX

Meetings

Section 1. The student council shall meet once a week.

Section 2. Special meetings may be called as necessary by the president or adviser.

ARTICLE X

Adviser

Section 1. The principal shall appoint a member of the faculty to serve as adviser to the student council.

Section 2. The term of office of the adviser is left to the discretion of the principal.

ARTICLE XI

Adoption and Amendment

Section 1. This constitution shall be ratified by a two-thirds majority vote of the student council and a simple majority of the student body.

Section 2. Amendments to the constitution may be proposed by any member of the student body, the faculty, or administration and ratified by a two-thirds vote of the council and a simple majority vote of the student body.

Section 3. Proposed amendments must be read to the council at one regular meeting, be voted on by the council at the following regular meeting, and be voted on by the student body within the succeeding week.

ARTICLE XII

Parliamentary Authority

Section 1. Robert's Rules of Order, newly revised, shall be the standard parliamentary text of this organization and shall govern all cases not otherwise covered in this constitution.

ARTICLE XIII

By-Laws

(As needed)

The Effective Student Council in the Mid-Seventies

Purposes, Power and Authority

Before a student council can have any degree of success, it must have definite purposes for existing; and its members, the student body, the faculty, administration, and parents and other members of the community must be aware of what these purposes are. Objectives vary from school to school, but there are certain basic objectives found in almost every constitution. These basic objectives include:

► To provide learning experiences for members of the school community.

► To establish student voice in appropriate procedures and practices within the building.

► To bring that student voice into full participation with administrative decisions.

► To develop attitudes toward good citizenship, leadership, scholarship, human values, and service.

► To assist in school management.

► To provide a training ground for developing student leadership.

► To further positive human relationships within the school community.

These purposes should be guidelines for selecting projects and should serve as the evaluative instrument for measuring the council's success. If a project will not help a council to reach its goals, that project should not be undertaken.

It would be well for every council to begin its year citing goals established by the constitution; objectives established for the current year; programs, projects, and activities selected to

achieve these goals; behavioral outcomes; evaluational criteria; and other relevant consideration. If a council annually re-assesses its objectives in the world, it cannot fail to achieve them.

Along with these long-range general objectives, which usually remain constant, every council must choose some specific goals for *this* year, *this* student body. These goals can be what the council hopes to accomplish within a particular time period, even to the point of establishing deadlines. Various goals can be formulated as the needs arise; and this usually happens when specific problems or conditions in the school are considered and discussed. Some samples of specific aims are: to improve attendance at basketball games; to improve lunchroom behaviors; to sponsor a foreign exchange student; to conduct a leadership training program; and to sponsor an ecology project.

The successful student council sets goals, long-range and short-range. It chooses its projects carefully. It measures the success and effectiveness of those projects, and it constantly works toward the goal of student accountability.

Rights and Responsibilities

Along with an awareness of purpose is the need for an understanding of the powers and responsibilities of the student council. The entire school community needs to know what student powers exist, how they are delegated, and under what conditions they can be withdrawn. It is well for a council to concur with the building committee, the administration, and the entire school community on what the council's areas of authority are.

The areas of authority may be divided into three types. The first is the area in which a council can be given full control and responsibility. A number of activities, varying from school to school, fall within this area. The successful completion of the projects for which a council has full responsibility will enhance the entire school program, but their failure could possibly ruin the school. A high level of trust in the student council exists among the administration and faculty in schools which place a large number of activities completely within the scope of student council control.

A second area, perhaps the largest, is the one in which the council shares control and responsibility with the faculty and

administration. Activities in this area are usually closely related to the total educational program, as it affects the entire school community, and cannot be controlled completely by the student council.

The third area of concern is one in which the student council has no power or authority. This area also varies a great deal from school to school.

How Much Power?

In all cases, students should have the right to express their opinions on any issue within the school, since students are affected by everything that happens in the school. However, a student council is limited in its authority and power to intercede in some areas. These limitations should be clear to council members, to the student body, to the faculty, to the administration, and to the community at large.

One of the great hopes in American education today is the fact that students are obtaining a voice in practically every area of school concern at practically every level. It is becoming more common to find student representatives on school boards, to find student representatives on faculty curriculum committees, and to find students speaking with authority and power in representing various levels of authority and activity. It is also quite common to find schools in which a student council is absolutely limited to minor services within the life of a school.

The effectiveness of the council is very much related to the effeciveness of its student members' behavior. It is related to their maturity in responding to the opportunities of responsibility. Elimination of councils from schools is frequently the result of irresponsible activity by either the whole council or individual members. Every council annually re-earns the opportunity to represent student voice and to achieve the objectives that are set forth in the constitution. One of the facts of existence for an effective, living student council is the need to understand how important it is that goals be set high; that projects be significant, well-done, and well-evaluated; and that the outcomes be significant in the lives of students, staff, parents, and community people. A student council is no longer a dance-giving, service organization playing at student government.

The Effective Student Council in the Mid-Seventies

Organization

To be effective, a student council must be well organized along democratic principles. It must seek to represent the entire student body, not just the academically talented students or those who belong to many clubs and organizations. Furthermore, it must represent a student body which is constantly changing, because students are moving in and out, because faculty members are changing, and because American education is shifting in both goals and procedures for attaining its goals.

Some councils are made up of representatives from the various organizations within a school, while others include only homeroom, English class, or social studies class representatives. If the council is to furnish an opportunity for democracy to grow and be understood, it must organize itself to represent students equally and take into account that students are constantly changing.

Subject-Class Representation

The most popular basis for representation in the council is the subject class. Social studies classes, for example, are usually about the same size within a school, and all students are required to be registered in one of them. This type of organization provides a means for regular reports by the representatives to the groups which elect them. In addition, it gives all students the opportunity to have their ideas and suggestions considered by both the council and the administration. The student council can be the voice of the student body while functioning as a laboratory experience for the social studies program.

In some schools the student council members are elected in the first period class, or the fifth period class. These periods are

sometimes a few minutes longer than other periods during the day in order to allow time for announcements and student council reports.

The Petition System

Some councils have gone to a petition system of representation, under which a student runs for office on the basis of a petition signed by 50 student supporters. Each signer of the petition gives his name and phone number in order to be represented. Students are asked to represent themselves only once by signing for one person. Students who are not contacted to be represented through the petition system record their names on a list of "up for grabs."

Under a petition system, membership is maintained on the basis of continued support. If a member of the student body feels he isn't well represented, he may go to the office and have his name removed from the carbon of his representative's petition. His name is recorded on the "up for grabs" list. If a representative's group drops below the minimal standard of 35, he loses all of his representatives and must either gain some more to get back on the council or simply lose his seat.

The petition system provides for special interest and minority groups in the school to be honestly represented on council. It provides for women's groups, for black students, for Chicano students, for the left-out student. Such a system also provides for those students who choose not to be represented in the school by keeping their names on the "up for grabs" section which means, in effect, "We do not wish to be represented on our student government."

The petition system allows for young people to be represented or to become representatives even if they enter the school in late September, mid-November, late March or mid-April. It means that students who want to continue as representatives must contact their constituents to tell them what's going on; to see how they want to be involved; to see what kind of viable representation is important; and to see that those members of the student body who choose to be represented *are* indeed represented.

Reporting to the School

Many councils have a mimeographed form for representatives to use for note-taking during the business meetings. These forms

follow the usual order of business with spaces left for notes on the officers' reports, committee reports, and unfinished and new business. They are used by representatives in reporting to their homerooms or other base groups and have a section for comments and suggestions made by the members of the group. This type of reporting is usually more successful than posting or reading mimeographed copies of the minutes of the meetings. It encourages more discussion on council activities and gets more students interested in participating in these activities. Many councils regularly require members to give sample reports, and then constructively criticize these to be sure that the members are learning how to report, how to represent different points of view, and how to present the data fairly.

Some councils prepare regular printed reports of council activities to be distributed to all students. Others have sections in the school newspaper for reporting business conducted by the council. These are good if space and time are allotted for the discussion of the student council activities and for the suggestions of students not in the council to be heard and considered by the council. Democracy takes considerably more time than other systems of government.

Regardless of the method used, it is of utmost importance that the student body get regular reports of the plans and actions of the council and that every student have an opportunity to present his ideas, suggestions, and concerns to the council.

School and Community

The successful student council not only keeps the student body informed about the council and its activities and encourages all students to offer suggestions, but it also does everything it can to promote good communications between the school and every element of the community. Student councils must actively communicate with radio, television, local newspapers, parents, merchants, and families of students within the school.

Student councils are frequently asked to help with community projects such as the United Way Drive; Ecology Week; Earth Day; anti-vandalism campaigns; voter registration; and clothing, toy and canned food drives. They also cooperate with dozens of local, state, national, and international agencies who seek student

support for causes. By participation in these kinds of activities, the council members learn a great deal about the world and about themselves; and the council helps to make the general public aware that young people are interested not only in having fun but also in contributing positively to the school and community.

Who Should Be a Council Member?

The size of the council is only important in that every student should feel represented. If qualifications or academic restrictions are placed on membership, many students feel unrepresented. Therefore, every student in the school should be eligible to run for a position as a representative or officer in the council. Leadership is not relegated to the academically bright or to those who have outgoing personalities. Positions of leadership should be available to all students who know what the council is trying to do and who will work to achieve those goals. An educated electorate will not be swayed by surface popularity if it knows what expectations are placed on candidates for office.

One system of educating the electorate is to provide a forum wherein the candidates for office must respond to questions set by the current officers to demonstrate to the entire student body each individual's qualifications in terms of his own understandings; e.g., what are the responsibilities of the office of president; what do you feel are the outstanding characteristics of a leader in our school; what projects do you see as being important for our council to achieve during the coming year? The same questions, asked of all the candidates in front of the student body, one at a time, will demonstrate to student voters the kind of candidate and the kind of officer they want.

The student council experience can help young people learn what a democracy is about—to discover ways of showing differences among candidates on their beliefs as to what should be done about ecology, or spirit, or pride, or communication procedures, or whatever the issues are. The student newspaper provides a valuable vehicle. Small group open forums and rap sessions are helpful. Every school can provide significant ways for educating the student body as to the qualifications of the candidates who are running for office, in terms of the goals of student council and the goals of the school.

Who is a Leader?

Leadership is essential in the council, but it is not limited to one specific kind of student. A council full of straight "A" students is not necessarily a good working council and certainly is not effective in the normal high school today. Such a council does not usually have the full support of the entire student body, and is publicly considered an organization of a select few rather than a representative body of everyone.

It is possible for a student council to provide its own guidelines on expectations of council members. In other words, if school rules are blatantly disobeyed, it should be within a council's purview to ask a member to resign from the council. The group which elects a student should know why he has been asked to resign, or should provide the reason that he ought to be asked to resign, and should elect a replacement for him. Many students who have never felt significant belonging will find it in a student council that requires them to assume responsibilities and provides them with a vehicle for their own personal growth, for their group's growth, and for the achievement of the council for the purposes of the school.

How Many Officers?

While the number of officers may vary depending on the size of the council and the duties to be performed, there should be no more officers than are needed for the amount and variety of work to be done. Usually the officers of a student council are the president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer and parliamentarian. Some councils have other officers, such as the corresponding secretary or clerk.

Certainly the president and vice-president should be elected by and from the entire student body since they are called upon to represent all the students on many occasions. They will probably preside over the student body during assemblies, and they are called upon by various groups in the community to speak for the student body. It is wise to have the entire student body elect them, although there is concern that freshman or sophomores may not have a voice in electing the all-school officers who speak for them.

The other officers should be elected either by the student body

or the student council from among its own members, since their duties and responsibilities are sometimes limited to the council itself. Because the members of the council know about the specific duties expected of these officers, they can elect those students who are best qualified or who may most benefit from the learning experience which the office will provide.

The duties of student council officers vary from school to school and change in any one school as the council grows and takes on new responsibilities. In recent years, there has been a major change in the office of the vice-president. At one time, the only duty assigned to the vice-president was that of presiding during the absence of the president. This is no longer the case.

Specific duties are usually assigned to the office of vice-president because the person holding that office possesses many of the qualifications of the president. These duties may include such assignments as chairman of the assembly committee, of the evaluation committee, or of the constitution committee; or coordinator of the work of all the committee chairmen of the council. The position of vice-president is infinitely more than just an honor—his abilities as a leader and an organizer are essential to the effective council.

Elections—How Often?

Although some schools elect officers every semester, it is usually better to elect them for a full school year in order that they may conduct a full year's program of activities. The council then has an opportunity to achieve long-range goals. Changing officers at mid-term tends to reduce the effectiveness of long-range projects but can improve opportunities for leadership education by involving more young people. New mid-year officers, if they are to receive maximum training and experience, would need to appoint committee chairmen and members, and these new appointees would have to spend valuable time in becoming familiar with their duties and responsibilities, as well as the work and plans of their predecessors.

The system which is most appropriate for the school is the system that the school ought to use. Some schools elect officers at mid-term for an entire year. Their election in January provides an opportunity of working for half a year (spring semester) with the past officers while preparing them to work for a half a year

(fall semester) on their own and then to serve as advisory council members during the following semester. Whatever system seems most appropriate is the one to use, so long as the central focus is the learning experiences of young people who have assumed the responsibilities of leadership.

Holding Elections

Student council officers may be elected in the spring of the school year preceding the year in which these officers are to serve. This procedure gives the newly-elected officers time to attend summer conferences and workshops and to become better prepared to handle the specific duties which they have been elected to fulfill. Spring elections also give those students who have not had previous student council experience an opportunity to visit council meetings and become more familiar with the committees and with their duties and the duties of all the officers and members of the council, as well as to help many students discover the procedures which are appropriate for an effective student council in this particular school.

Elections should be conducted in a very serious manner with all campaigning done in a sensible way. An election committee within a council can establish rules and guidelines concerning nominations, campaigns, posters, and the election itself. These rules should include such information as deadlines for filing for office, limitations on campaign expenditures, limitations on size and number of posters and their locations in and around the school, and deadlines for submitting copies of campaign speeches as well as expense accounts and other data. All rules and guidelines should have administrative involvement and approval prior to being publicized within the school and then should be strictly adhered to by all the candidates, with the alternative being elimination from running for office.

Campaign Expenditures

Large schools have discovered that it is a good practice to limit the amount of money which any student can spend on his campaign for a student council office. This gives every candidate an equal chance and eliminates a great deal of the "popularity" aspect in elections. Popularity as a criteria for election cannot

and should not be eliminated completely. A leader should be popular and should receive the popular vote. Unfortunately we sometimes allow beauty, athletic skills, or prowess in another field to determine student elections, rather than qualifications in the student council arena. Effective officers and leaders must be respected by students, staff, the community, and the organizational community within the school. Such knowledge and respect is often a result of popularity in the sense of being known, in the sense of good reputation. An effective student council leader needs followers as well as ability.

To prevent candidates from making campaign promises which are vote-getters but which are unrealistic, such as "shorter school days," "coke in the drinking fountains," "air conditioning," "swimming pools," etc., many councils require candidates to submit copies of their campaign speeches prior to the time of the campaign assembly. This adds to the seriousness of the assembly and the election. It is advisable to use student evaluators of these speeches rather than faculty or administrator evaluators. When a member of the faculty is asked to censor a student council election speech, a considerable amount of misunderstanding is practically guaranteed. When speeches are cleared by other students for information, appropriateness of language, and other criteria established by the election committee, students do not resist but welcome another kind of student involvement in helping to create a viable educational experience. The student body, by comparing the speeches and considering the background, personality, and ability of each candidate, can then select the best qualified candidates for office because the speeches have been prepared in the light of appropriate limitations.

Nominations

Various methods are used to nominate candidates for office. Some schools use the procedure of self-nomination. Under this plan, a student files his own name and intention to campaign for an office in the student council. Other schools use a petition-type nomination whereby a student must submit a petition, signed by a specified number of students and faculty members, before he can qualify as a candidate. Another method is to have a nominating committee select candidates. This tends to limit

the number of candidates and eliminate the privilege of selection by the entire study body. Schools which use the nominating committee method usually provide for the nomination of persons "from the floor."

Regardless of the method used, it is usually considered a good practice for the candidates to campaign individually rather than as "parties" because a very capable and strong leader can "carry" less desirable candidates into the other offices with him. And, secondly, it is very difficult for a party to establish a full platform of objectives and goals which are different from the platform of another party.

Voting

The actual election of officers should be a meaningful educational experience for every student in the school. Many schools use voting machines during their elections, along with full procedures for registration and election. This listing of students prior to the election both eliminates multiple votes by students and prepares them for the local, state, and national elections in which they are or will be participating.

Where voting machines are not available, various other methods have been used. The best procedure is not to take ballots to students but to set up various balloting places and have the students go to them to cast their secret ballots.

The election should be given good publicity, and students should be encouraged to exercise their right to vote. When campaigns and elections are conducted properly, students are more likely to give the candidates serious consideration and to cast their ballots for those candidates who seem to them to be best qualified. If students regard the whole election process as a farce, they will usually elect someone to "go along with the joke."

Installation Ceremonies

After student council officers and members have been elected, an installation assembly should be held. Such an assembly is appropriate in the spring, right after the election; a repeat installation assembly may be held in the fall to introduce the officers for the year to those students who did not have an opportun-

ity to vote because they were not members of the student body at the time of the election. A dignified and impressive ceremony will do a great deal to make the officers and members aware of the importance of the student council, of the kinds of objectives which the council faces during this year, and of the differential staffing that their jobs require in order to be worthy of the trust and confidence shown by their fellow students in electing them. Such a ceremony gives prestige to the student council by making the student body more aware of the responsibility placed on it in the entire school program.

The installation ceremony need not be elaborate, but should be serious and dignified in order to do a careful job of educating the constituents as to what the student council is concerned with. The first part of the program can be devoted to the aims and objectives of the council and a summary of the work done by the council during the preceding year. The second part of the assembly can be the installation of each officer with appropriate oaths of office or speeches of acceptance. Samples of installation programs, including various oaths of office, are contained in *The Student Council Handbook* of the National Association of Student Councils and the *Handbook of the National Honor Society,* both published by the National Association of Secondary School Principals.

Committees

Every successful student council uses committees to help in the efficient achievement of its goals. Standing committees are those which function throughout the year. The names and general duties of these committees are usually contained in the student council constitution. Typical councils include these committees: assembly committee, service and courtesy committee, honors and awards committee, constitution committee, social committee, executive committee, and evaluation committee. Special committees are those appointed or selected to perform specific short-term duties. Each committee should have a chairman; for larger committees or those with many duties, a co-chairman may be helpful. All chairmen should be appointed by the president with the advice and help of the other officers and the student council adviser.

The size of a committee depends on the amount of work to be

done. Usually a small group can function more efficiently than a larger one. However, in very large councils, in order to assign every member to a standing committee, it is frequently necessary to make some committees rather large. Every committee member can be given the opportunity to participate in the decisions made and the work done by his committee. Some of the more experienced members of the council may be assigned to each committee, but they should not be allowed to control the activities and decisions of the committee entirely. If a significant learning experience is to happen, the less domineering members of the council must have opportunities to grow through committee membership and responsibility.

Each committee should know exactly what its duties and responsibilities are and should be required to make regular reports on its activities. In cases where the committee is given the power to make final decisions, these decisions should be reported to the council. If a committee is empowered only to make recommendations, a vote by the council is necessary before action can be taken on these recommendations. A considerable misunderstanding among committee members and council members is constantly evident where committees do not know what their assignment is, what their deadlines are, and what kinds of reports are expected of them by the council. The effective student council sees to it that every committee knows what it is assigned to do and when its deadlines are, and it expects the committees to meet those deadlines.

Student Participation

When possible, students who are not student council representatives should be asked to serve on student council committees. This may not be possible if the council and committee meetings are held during a regular classroom period. However, it is always a good practice to involve as many students as possible in all council activities. Another good practice is to have faculty members other than the council adviser serve as adult members of the various standing committees.

The president must take time in selecting students to serve on the special committees and not just make appointments from among those whose hands go up as volunteers. A good committee balance of various characteristics and talents is always appropriate. Unless immediate action must be taken, it is best to make

a list of all those who are interested in serving on a particular committee and to consider each member of this list carefully. In this way, a president can avoid appointing the same people over and over again and can try to give newer council members opportunities to learn more as well as to contribute in more meaningful ways. The secretary should maintain a file of committee appointments, and the president should refer to this to avoid unnecessary duplications.

Good parliamentary procedure should be followed in all student council meetings, but members ought not to become so involved in detailed procedure that they fail to accomplish any business. The larger the council, the greater the need for strict adherence to an orderly procedure; but this procedure should be as simple as possible to keep the meetings moving in an orderly fashion. Several lessons in the procedures to be followed should be given early in the year so that all members will know what their rights and responsibilities are with regard to the procedures to be used. This helps to increase the participation of new members, because they will learn when and how to present motions and to participate in discussions and will not hesitate to speak in representing their constituents.

Reading Is Essential

There are a number of very good books and pamphlets on parliamentary procedure and other meeting skills which may be used by student councils. The officers and the adviser should study the available materials in the school library and then decide on a book or pamphlet which they think suits their needs and which will be relatively easy to use. If it isn't possible for each member of the council to have a copy of the parliamentary procedure authority to be used, a mimeographed sheet of some of the most important information can be furnished to each member. This should contain such information as the order of precedence of motions and privileged motions and how to present motions and amendments to motions. The parliamentarian, the president, and the adviser must have access to the parliamentary procedure authority during all of the business meetings of the council so that questions of order can be answered promptly without delaying the meeting.

Council Meetings

The effective student council holds regularly scheduled meetings on school time in a specified place. Most councils have weekly meetings while others meet once every two weeks, with executive committee meetings on alternating weeks. The length of meetings varies with the school schedule. In schools where the council meets as a class during one period each day, one day each week is set aside as business meeting day. Other days are for standing committees, executive committee meetings, instructions in parliamentary procedure or leadership education, evaluation, public relations, and other items of council business. Considerable time is usually spent on reports of magazine and newsletter articles and on reports from students who have attended conferences, workshops, civic meetings, and other student council functions.

Not every school has a schedule which allows the council to meet as a regular class. Arrangements must be made for student council meetings to be held. In schools where a director of activities is also the student council adviser, meetings can be held during the regular class period, the period being rotated every week so that the council members will miss each class only once during any six or seven week period. Some classes will require difficult make-up work for both student and teacher. However, a priority scale must be established within every building as to what kinds of learnings will probably be most beneficial for both students and staff at this particular time. Some schools schedule their meetings before or after school, or during the lunch period. These arrangements work well in some cases, but frequently they are not successful because of busing schedules or extended school days or conflict with other kinds of student activities. The point is that councils must meet in order to be effective. The meetings themselves must be planned to be effective. The meetings must involve the representatives in important business in order for the meetings and the council to be successful and effective.

Executive Committee Meetings

Arrangements should be made for the executive committee, including all officers and standing committee chairmen, to meet at least one day before the business meeting to plan the agenda for

the meeting. This does not mean that the executive committee is to discuss and make final decisions about the items of business, but rather that an outline of the business to be conducted will be formulated. In this way, the actual business meeting will run more smoothly and valuable time will not be lost on trying to decide which items of business need to be brought up for discussion and action. Ideally, a proposed agenda will be distributed to both the staff and students at least two days prior to the meeting, so that interested members of the student body may attend the meeting. At any rate, a meeting on Wednesday provides for an executive committee meeting on Monday, and reports can be given by Friday of that week.

Finances

One of the biggest jobs many councils have is financing their own activities. Some councils are fortunate in that their operating funds are provided by the school system by an act of the school board. Most councils, however, must plan and carry out fund-raising activities in order to operate successfully during the year. In either case, a budget for the year's activities should be made and followed. There can be a significant educational experience for council members and the student body in realizing the various ways of making, distributing, and being accountable for money.

Councils which conduct fund-raising activities should keep in mind that these activities should contribute to the attainment of their goals. They should do more than just raise money for the council. They must have educational value to those involved in them, not only in the planning and carrying out stages but in the evaluation of the success of the projects. Fund-raising activities should not tax any specific person unduly, and their success should depend on the work of all members of the council and not just a few.

Accurate accounts of all money handled by the council must be kept and filed with the treasurer of the school. In many schools, state or local laws require all monies of school organizations to be submitted to a central office for banking and official bookkeeping records. This does not relieve the council of its responsibility for maintaining its own set of records so it will

know at all times just how much money is available. In those schools where councils have their own bank accounts, accurate accounts and records must be maintained, usually with a system of cross-filing to make more than one person accountable. All expenditures should be approved by the council itself, and no student should be allowed to sign checks for the disbursement of council funds without the signature of the adviser.

The successful student council does not spend all its time on fund-raising projects. It raises only those funds necessary to meet its budget and devotes the bulk of its time and energy to activities which help it attain the goals and objectives upon which the council is founded. Usually councils develop money sources by selling a product or a service or through taxation. The taxation system is simply an assessment of clubs, organizations, and class councils for annual dues or the sale of an activity ticket. Taxes are always distasteful to at least some members of the student body.

Another method is to sell a service, to provide an all-school show or a car wash, or to sell clean-up and paint-up activities of the council members themselves. A third way is to sell a product. These range from candy and magazines to pennants, pompons, book covers, handbooks, publications of all kinds, light bulbs, supplies, and an unlimited number of products related to school spirit. Here again, the way of raising the money must be in full accord with the goals and objectives that the council has set for itself.

Common Fund-Raising Errors

A common error of many councils is the raising of money by means of lotteries or other games of chance, which are frequently in violation of local or state laws. A careful investigation of money-making activities must be conducted by the student council and its adviser so that responsible, legal activities will be conducted.

Some councils raise funds to purchase items which should be furnished by the school system itself. Items such as public address systems, movie projectors, drapes for the auditorium, band uniforms and instruments, and library books are all important for the operation of the school, but their purchase

should not be a function of the student council. These and other items of school furnishings should be provided by the school board itself. Money raised by council can often be applied to such uses as leadership training for students through local workshops, summer workshops and conferences, scholarships for worthy students, international relations programs, and charitable activities within the community. Money can be a serious problem for a school. The quality of the treasurer himself is terribly important for the success of an effective student council.

The Effective Student Council in the Mid-Seventies

Activities and Projects

Many problems face schools and councils every year. Some problems are perennial, while others arise from particular situations and are of short duration if handled properly. It is in the discussion of these problems and their solutions that many student council projects and activities are suggested. All suggestions should be thoroughly explored before a decision is made to conduct a particular project. Many times a hastily-made decision leads to added problems and may not contribute to the solution of any problems already existing.

In selecting activities for particular purposes, students should not rely solely on their own imagination and creativity. Many articles have been written about various projects of other councils and can be found in publications available to student councils. These should be read and considered. One of the best sources of information about student council projects and activities is *A Guide to Student Council Projects,* published by the National Association of Secondary School Principals.

While a council spends a great deal of time with projects aimed at solving particular school problems, it should not overlook the necessity for sponsoring activities which will help it attain its larger goals and which provide a wide range of different kinds of projects. Periodically, a council should review its aims and see what it has done or what it can do about each objective it has chosen to achieve. A full range of projects means that there will be recreational, educational, attitude-building, leadership, money-handling, and service projects of many different kinds.

The Activities Calendar

Just as a council needs to have a year-long program of training, it needs a calendar of activities. It needs an overview of events and achievement. This will help to eliminate most of the conflicts in the dates and types of activities to be held during the school year and will allow sufficient time for the adequate planning of all activities. In the process of preparing the calendar, a student council may also strive to develop a sound rapport with the principal.

The various committees should take a very active part in setting up the council calendar of activities. During the early part of the school year, every committee should make a list of the various activities it feels should be included in the year's program and when such activities should be held. These lists should include those activities which are "traditional" and also new activities which the committee members think should be sponsored. When the reports of all committees are combined, the total program and calendar can be established in cooperation with the principal. Some changes will have to be made during the year, but the basic plan will help to make the council's work rewarding and to the point. By working with the principal in the planning process, a student council can begin to foster a relationship of trust with the administration and can avoid a mutually embarrassing veto of an activity. Meanwhile, the effectiveness of the council will be enhanced by the completeness of the planning operation.

Planning

All projects and activities of the student council require detailed planning. They should not be hastily chosen, nor planned with an insufficient amount of time to achieve them. Poorly planned and executed activities may result in loss of respect by the entire school community, while well planned programs will bring added respect and support from nearly everyone involved.

The planning should include such items as obtaining administrative approval, deciding when the project is to be conducted, estimating the cost of conducting the program, assigning committee work and advance preparation, and developing effective publicity. The details of carrying out the project and a full evaluation and summation should also be planned.

Councils frequently do not provide enough time and the proper publicity for their projects. Students become too busy getting ready for the project to let others know very much about the activity or to try to arouse the interest of the student body and community. As a result, poor attendance and reluctant involvement are the earmarks of a number of student activities.

All methods of publicizing activities should be in good taste so as not to offend any person or group. Attention-getting and thought-provoking advertising should be used. Simple announcements in classrooms, in the school newspaper, or over the public address system and on hall bulletin boards are usually not enough. Imaginative use of all publicity techniques will result in fuller participation by students and staff.

Some councils feel that they must sponsor every activity of the school. The effective council encourages other organizations in the school to sponsor worthwhile activities and then provides full support and help in planning and carrying out the projects In determining whether an activity sponsored by the council or some other organization is worthwhile, the goals of the sponsored activity must be considered. Will the activity present a genuine challenge to students? Will the project be of educational interest to most of the student body? Is there a reasonable chance for success? Can the project be completed within this school year? Is the activity appropriate for our students in our schools? What purposes will the activity serve? Are they in line with the goals of the student council? Is the activity practical rather than idealistic? Does it meet student, staff, and community needs? Are we the ones to do it?

Evaluation

The effective student council must evaluate each of its projects individually and in the light of the whole combination of all activities together. The criteria for measurement of success is established by utilizing the original objective set forth for the council to achieve, and measuring whether or not these projects have attained the goals set. The function of evaluation can point out both the good and bad aspects of every project.

A council must not become discouraged by the failure of any one of the activities, but should determine exactly what caused the failure and determine not to have it happen again. The

council which tries nothing will probably survive, but will not have a very successful year. The council which has nothing but failures should do more than try again; it should find the causes for the failures and eliminate them. The causes may result from inadequate planning, limited student interest, poor publicity, or any number of other reasons. Whatever the cause, the council should make a concentrated effort to determine the problems and make the necessary adjustments in order to provide future success in the activities it undertakes.

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The Effective Student Council in the Mid-Seventies

Training

If a council and its members are to continue to grow and become more effective, the adviser must take every possible opportunity to broaden his knowledge concerning student council and its many dimensions, and the members themselves need to have new experiences and enriched training. Many opportunities for such leadership education are available. There are local and state workshops, conferences, leadership training classes and visits to councils at other schools. There are a number of local civic organizations that can help significantly in organizational leadership and in explaining those purposes and functions of their organizations which can be of value to the local student council.

While training and learning should become a part of every activity in which the council engages, there should be a definite effort made to sponsor activities aimed specifically at training the council members.

Even though a council does not have daily sessions, the basic training of the members should be an on-going procedure. A great deal of this training can be accomplished through a local workshop held early in the year, as well as a mid-year workshop to re-assess progress and establish new directions. A part of every business meeting should be devoted to some phase of the total training program for members.

Many effective councils conduct workshops for training their members. These vary in length but can be planned to meet the particular needs of an individual council. It is best to have such programs early in the school year, or at least early in the experience of the elected leader. Such programs are particularly beneficial to new members because they afford an opportunity for members to become familiar with the basic concepts

of what the council is, how it should function, and what their role in that council can or should become. The members can be made more aware of their duties and responsibilities as representatives and officers and can learn how to carry out these responsibilities more effectively. Lessons in parliamentary procedure and other decision-making procedures should be a part of these programs so that all members will know how and when to present motions and will gain confidence in their ability to participate. The constitution should be thoroughly studied at these workshops so that all members are familiar with what the constitution says, how it functions and what its limitations are.

Another topic that should be given some time during a local workshop is the function of committees and of individual members. If possible, the standing committees of student council should meet together and work on their calendar of activities for the year. This will help avoid many last minute rushes to get projects and activities ready for specific times or events. In large councils, the local workshop helps each of its members to become better acquainted with every other person on the council. The functions of group maintenance, of task achievement, and of individual development are the three focal points of every local workshop.

Summer Workshops

Most state student council associations sponsor a summer leadership workshop. It is usually held on a college campus or in a camp setting. Student council officers, advisers, and members, as well as community members, can gain valuable information and training by attending one of these workshops. Enthusiasm is generated, and the knowledge gained can be spread throughout the local student council when the delegates return to their own schools and their own particular school problems. Every council should try to send its officers and as many other members as it can afford to the state workshop. Even the most effective council can gain yardage by sending representatives to leadership workshops to exchange ideas with other schools. Much of the wisdom gained is a sharing of knowledges among student delegates and advisers. If a school is not aware

of where its local or state workshops are being held, it may write to the National Association of Student Councils to request information about the local workshops, as well as information about national workshops which the National Association of Student Councils conducts each summer.

Student council conferences are a valuable source of information and training for both students and advisers. Many states are divided into districts or regions in which conferences are held annually. These are usually one-day conferences, do not require a great deal of travel or expense on the part of those attending, and are not limited as to the number of delegates who may attend from any one school. They feature speakers, discussion groups, problem-solving sessions, problem clinics, elections of district or regional officers, and consideration of crucial issues in the student council field. Most state associations also hold one- or two-day annual conferences which may be attended by a limited number of delegates from every member school. Students and advisers attend general sessions with outstanding speakers or panels, demonstrations, and discussions on student council, school, and community problems. Campaigning and the election of state officers, as well as social activities, add to the experience and enjoyment of the conference for those attending. Such meetings can be battery rechargers even for those who attended summer workshops.

NASC Conference

The National Association of Student Councils sponsors an annual conference in addition to the many other services it provides for member schools. This conference is held during the summer and usually lasts four days. The number of delegates a state may send to this conference is based on the number of schools in the state which are members of NASC. The conferference offers an opportunity for students from every state to get together and exchange ideas as well as to hear outstanding speakers and other presentations keyed on significant issues. Each delegate may attend a number of discussion groups and problem clinics or workshops of his own choice to secure the kind of information which he and his council need to function effectively.

Many Publications Available

One of the most valuable sources of information available to all council members is the vast amount of printed materials on various phases of student council and student council activities. Newsletters, conference reports, and special publications from state and regional associations and the National Association of Student Councils should be read by council members and made available for various committees to use as reference materials. The NASSP Office of Student Activities publishes *Student Life Highlights* and sends it to member schools in multiple copies so that students, principals, and advisers may have access to new information.

The NASC Handbook contains detailed information on the basic principles of student council organization, constitutions, standards, training, local workshops, election procedures, public relations, year-long programs, finances, annual reports, and evaluation and should be examined by every new group of council officers.

The Effective Student Council in the Mid-Seventies

Evaluation

Too many student councils forget that an important part of their existence is the evaluation of their achievement. It may not be good mental health to be constantly looking back; neither is it good to forget the past and proceed as if nothing had happened. Evaluation can point the way to even greater accomplishments. The successful student council is aware of its weaknesses and tries to overcome them and at the same time tries to increase its strengths.

Evaluations of the council's work by the entire student body can be made by obtaining representative samples of student opinion and school-wide polls. It is ineffective to have an entire student body formally evaluate every project of the council, but it is effective to involve new voices in measuring the success of the council. Informal discussions at the time of council reports can serve the same purpose, but the council representative should be willing to accept any and all comments on the effectiveness of each project. Explanations by representatives for weaknesses or strengths may be helpful in focusing on significant concerns.

In addition to any evaluations made by the student body through questionnaires, opinion polls, discussions, rap sessions, or other devices, every committee should evaluate its own work. This evaluation should be written and filed for reference and used by future committees as they are appointed. The personal evaluation of every student council member is also a significant part of the evaluation picture for a student council. There are many techniques for each member to be aware of his own growth; the major idea is to see that each member does grow profes-

sionally as a student council member and as a committee member and that the council itself grows.

Evaluation, therefore, must focus on two issues: 1) the growth process of the individual, the council, and the student body; and 2) the achievement process of the individual, the council, the student body, the school itself, and the community.

Recent educational emphasis has focused on behavioral objectives and behavioral outcomes in evaluating the success of any kind of educational program. There are many methods for evaluation, the questionnaire being one of the most widely used. After a major project or activity has been completed, students throughout the school may be asked to fill out a questionnaire concerning the activity and to make suggestions and recommendations which they feel would result in improvements. They should be encouraged also to point out those aspects of the activity which they felt were good. Students need to learn the value of constructive criticism and should not use the evaluation as just an opportunity to gripe and find fault. Many recent educational publications outline methods of developing significant behavioral questionnaires which contain accountability sections useful to a school and a council.

Types of Evaluation

One type of evaluation which has been very successful in many schools is a "summary of activities" evaluation. This type is made at the end of the school year and lists all of the council's activities and projects of that year. Students are asked to rate each activity on the questionnaire as excellent, good, fair, or poor, and needed or not needed. They also are encouraged to add comments and to suggest other projects and activities they would like to have the council consider. Two of the major results of this type of evaluation are: (1) the students are more aware and usually more appreciative of the vast number of activities sponsored by the council, and (2) the council learns which activities the students want continued and which ones they want started.

Some councils have had students evaluate their representatives. These evaluations are usually accomplished through the use of a questionnaire which is given to the students in social studies classes or other groups which elect the representatives. These

questionnaires include such questions as: Does your representative make regular reports on council business and activities? Does your representative encourage discussion of council proposals? Does your representative take your suggestions to the council and report back the council's response? Is your representative enthusiastic about the work of the council? Are students attentive and interested during the council reports? These evaluations let the students know that they have a responsibility to listen and contribute and also lets representatives know whether they are reporting effectively.

Evaluation is needed, but only if it is used properly and when it results in changes which are beneficial to the council, to the student body, and to the school community itself. To know where weaknesses and strengths exist is not enough; definite action must be taken as a result of the evaluations if they are to be worth the time and effort expended.

The Effective Student Council in the Mid-Seventies

Summary

The effective student council is actively and constantly engaged in learning, doing, and evaluating. It is an integral part of the total school program and as such contributes to the educational development of every student in the school. Under the guidance of an interested adviser and with the cooperation of an informed student body, faculty, administrative staff, and community, it is aware of the reasons for its existence and strives to attain its objectives. It is organized and operated on sound democratic principles with a good workable constitution that has been adopted by the entire student body as its procedural guide. The successful student council is aware of the limits of its powers and authority and knows that it does not govern the school but participates in its government in many ways.

Student council officers and members are elected by students in well-planned and well-conducted democratic elections, and they are installed in dignified ceremonies of inauguration. These officers and representatives realize the importance of doing their jobs to the best of their abilities and are given many opportunities to develop their own personal leadership qualities and commitments. Instead of relying on rigid grade and citizenship standards as a requirement for membership in the student council, the student body is educated to elect qualified leader-representatives and to demand of them their best services. Once elected, the officers and representatives are required to maintain responsible records of achievement and membership.

In local workshops, state workshops, group instruction and discussion, participation in conferences at all levels, and on-the-job training, officers and representatives learn to perform their duties effectively. Such experiences also have carry-over benefits

for these students, because they prepare them to be better citizens, leaders, and followers in their adult lives.

Committees play an important part in the successful functioning of the student council. Every council member is on at least one standing committee, and all members receive training and experience in the committee process. Committee meetings, while less formal than general business meetings of the whole council, are still conducted in a business-like manner with each member participating.

The effective student council holds regular business meetings on school time, has a planned agenda for each meeting, and follows appropriate meeting procedures. Accurate and neat records are kept of all council meetings, and these records are available for reference at all executive committee and general council meetings.

Planning, carrying out, and evaluating activities take up a great deal of the time of all effective councils. Discussion, suggestions, ideas, plans, and inspiration are all needed; but action has to take place before any problems are solved or conditions improved. Objectives are reached through a well-planned and well-executed year-long program of worthwhile projects designed to achieve those goals.

The effective student council knows the importance of evaluation and the place it holds in the growth and development of the council and its members. Various methods are continually employed by the council to discover and eliminate weak points and to strengthen effectiveness so that it can truly be an experience in democratic living, a valuable part of the total education of everyone the council serves.